



# LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

75th Year

2 JANUARY 1976

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# TLS

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The torments of  
Géricault

Contract and  
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Pen-and-ink study of an Amazon by Géricault. On page 33 Anita Brookner discusses the new edition of Charles Clément's classic monograph on the painter, which was first published in 1867.

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'From Sambo to  
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Fiction: Nadine Gordimer,  
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## Type-casting

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## Type-casting

By Michael Banton

**DANIEL J. LEAB:**  
From Sombro to Superspode  
The Black Experience in Motion  
Pictures  
301m, Secker and Warburg, £5.50.

Addressing a white American audience, James Baldwin once observed, "I am not a nigger. I am a man. And the question is, why do you need a nigger?" This challenge should occur to any reader of Daniel J. Leab's generously illustrated *From Samba to Superslide*, and it poses a whole set of subsidiary questions.

What seems beyond all reasonable doubt is that, whether we wanted them or not, Hollywood gave us a long series of migrants. Between the 1890s and 1950s the movie black—black as in blacker than black—was in blackface or nat—was no unweary menace, a dancing machine, a comic etanga, a folklift retainer, a cheerful flunkie, a talented unfathered child, a naïf, a clown, a caricature of the white immigrant and the rural bick were also unpleasant, but they were progressively softened as their groups were assimilated. The black group remained outside, the displacement of a blacker than blacker opposite to those pressured by white American society.

Why was such fare served up to us? The author suggests that it was primarily a response to the box office. Some images were unweelcome. When in 1910 Jack Johnson beat the white heavyweight boxing champion, a federal statute commenced any film of a prize fight intended for public showing, and the London County Council resolved that "public exhibition . . . of the recent prize fight in the United States . . . is undesirable". In places like Memphis, Tennessee, black film exhibit were positively obtained, and a screen image of the black person was forced to be worse than the reality even on fairly factual matters. For example, an exhibitor in 1917 sold his patrons liked a film but he was uneasy about showing it because the portrayals colored many officers' local attitudes might object to this. When, after 1946, this industry started to produce films about the least disturbing aspects of racial tension, this was in response to a search for profit in the face of growing competition from television. The motives were not very particularly of the *Melvin Van Peebles* variety: headline: "More Adult 'Key Key to Tom Cooj'."

he relied on cameramen to provide a striking visual surface and an actors to grapple with the script. When the actors were well cast, like Laughton and Elsa Lanchester in *Rembrandt*, this worked; when they were not, like Gertrude Lawrence in *Rembrandt* or Olivier as Nelson, it did not. In fact his judgment of actors was often erratic. He told Vivien Leigh she was completely wrong for Scarlett O'Hara and has contemplated Merle Oberon as Pocahontas.

Like David Selznick, another impresario of enormous flair, Korda wanted his productions to bear a personal signature. This sometimes led him to meddle with creative talent, employing a string of directors on *The Thief of Baghdad*, reviving Flaherty's *Elephant* and, exactly as *Conquering the Great Wall of China* was in the making, replacing it with *Uel*, an adaptation of Schnitzel's *Die Willehalm* and *Duel in the Sun*. There are many parallels between these two extraordinary men, whose paths actually crossed in 1934 when Selznick provided the American financing for Korda's *The Idol* and *The Third Man*. Both created fenceite stars whom they married; but Merle Onorin, like Jennifer Jones, did her best work apart from her husband. Both spent their lives as a married couple, and both were sensitive to the verge of financial collapse. Both died of heart attacks at the age of sixty-three. Finally, but not least, both were flamboyant charmers, possessed of formidable energy and will, engaged in a lifelong affair with the heavens. In the end, Korda left a single work of popular art as legendary as *Gone with the Wind*; he became the most remarkable single influence on British filmmaking, and in *J. Claudius* created a legend of a different kind: one of the screen's most powerful opportunities. As Korda himself remarked, its footage was as beautiful as anything he had ever seen.

**By Hans Keller**

what does my do with a watch-chain otherwise? That's clear from the very word, "watch-chain." It's self-evident that a watch has to dangle from it. And all that I need to attach it to is a ring, that is, a link in the dog-chain. And who is going to stick a dog into his waistcoat pocket? Nobody.

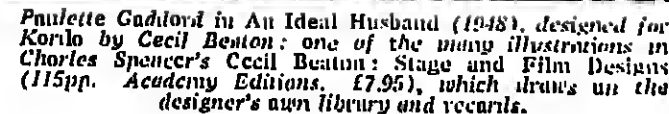
Moreover, I consider a watch superfluous. Consider, I live quite well, tho' I own none. Every morning, when I walk to work, I look up at the clock of the town hall to see what the time is, and I remember it all day long, so that I needn't wear my watch.

Do not tell me this does not work in English; I would know. But even so well would Groucho's most substantial sayings work in English English, as distinct from American? This consideration is, perhaps, the strangest, most concrete evidence of the impossibility of such translations: nobody would want to see an English translation of Groucho Marx's "I am good." He would know how bad it was. Translation, most of it, thrives on the reader's ignorance—while the few great translations (Schlegel's and Tuck's Shakespeare, for example) suffer under it; in order to be understood, they are abbreviated.

Someone who does not need them,

The sententia comparison with Groucho is jolly near-perfected, for it would be painfully difficult to transmute Karl Valentin into German Gorman, or fully to understand him without an instinctive awareness of the shadco of the Munich dialect—shades of both intonation and phraseology. I grew wise, to be sure, in close enough, slang-wise, to be able to follow his wayward Valentin's endemic variety of gestures, his peculiar brand of peronomesie. I should say that he is coming from Valentin's own country, but from a different linguistic region—*oys*, Prussia—would have felt that he was listening to jokes in "foreign" if he understood them at all. A Swiss Gorman might again take to them more naturally.

Likewise, it would be very difficult to read Groucho without having heard him, and it would indeed be difficult for me to read Valenti's book without the sharply de-



**ROBERT DRESSON :**  
Notes sur le cluémétographe  
139pp. Parlo : Gullmard. 19 fr.

Most of Robert Bresson's admirers—and, for that matter, most of his detractors—have long been aware of his distinction between *cinéma* and the *cinématographe*, not only in his own writing, but in his own pictures. These are Bresson's *Notes on the Subject* written over the past twenty-two years, collected to a slim volume and gratuitously (it seems) divided into two parts, 1946-1959 and 1960-1974, though it is evident that whatever is discernible. According to Bresson, the *cinéma* is photographed theatre, a medium that has been taken to the point of falseness of the theatre, but mixed up with truth and falsehood hopelessly. In the *cinéma*, films (movies?) are the responsibility of the director, who uses the language of English words who directs actors. These actors whose whole tendency is from the inside to the outside, a process of externalization, aim at naturalism, and operate in the *cinéma*. The *cinéma* is the medium of appearances, it is imitative and derivative. Further, it is rough and uneven and can only be compared to economic painting or, at the best, to rudimentary sculpture. The *cinématographe*, on the other hand, is the opposite. With the *cinématographe*, everything is just the opposite. Films are the responsibility of an individual (who shall remain nameless) who directs himself. He is not a director of professional actors) whose tendency is from the outside to the inside. What shows on the screen is their own nature. Le *cinématographe* is the creative art of philosophizing being. Being is the essence of reality, it selects them carefully and brings out entirely new links between them. Its surface is perfectly smooth; its productions are solid (or, as Bresson implied), like the great masterpieces by painter and composer.

For Bresson's *notes* are not just his own. A whole array of quotations by other artists is called forth to ennobles his stance. The same is often mentioned, told, or known about Bresson's film theory on practice: writers (Montaigne, Pascal, Racine) rub shoulders with painters (Leonardo, Cézanne) and musicians (Mozart, Debussy). Film directors, with the single exception of Dreyer, are mentioned only in passing, observed in only three films not recognizably referred to: *Thirteenth Second* over Tokyo, whose third second is in question, during which nothing happens, are described as an example of le *cinématographe*; Dreyer's *Joan of Arc* is also mentioned; finally, Bresson's own *Joan of Arc*, which receives praise. These various referees confirm the le *cinématographe* espies to the condition of music or painting. The beautiful and truthful visual one of *Joan of Arc* is the le *cinématographe* banker after the fashion of arts characterized either by abstraction, or at least (in the case of painting) by an emphasis on formal qualities to the detriment of narrative structure. Le *cinématographe* is also of averaging the terms of painting and music, whose beauty and significance are not dependent on the plot or dialogue of the films.

To the semilogist, such a view of the cinema is an now a cliché word in its common meaning, too much to recommend itself. Any film is indeed, intentionally or not, a pattern of sounds and images whose meaning may vary in its relationship with the film as narrative. Other directors have claimed to edit their films primarily in just these terms, rather than in terms of the trouble with Bresson's abrupt disjunction between cinema and *cinématographie* is that it is groundless. The most modern movie, *Apocalypse Now*, Minnelli's *The Four Horsemen*, *The Apocalypse* are also beautiful formal patterns, texts for the semilogist to decipher. The trouble is that the text of the film is a series of signs expressing concerns shared by every single director of importance (thus, the idea that sound pictures are a kind of "double exposure" signifies something, or the reason

that "what is meant for the eye must not just repeat what is meant for the ear"). Some of the techniques which Bresson advocates have long been practised in the cinema and indeed in the theatre: such is the case of the *méthode italienne* of training actors, leaving them to deliver their lines automatically, so that the proper emphasis and intonation also fall in place, so to speak, automatically. It has been used regularly by Jean Renoir.

More basic and more worrying is the untabled conception of *le monde* as *metaphis* as "pure" art. Impossible to express something strangely through the combined means of two arts, it must be either one or the other." Or again: "Nothing is clumsy and vain as an art conceived in the shape of another." (Which then, may we ask, the cause of reference to the other?) And why such statements as "Images—like modulations in music?" And "pure" poetry, "pure" cinema, in its attempt to free itself from the fetters of the theatre, or of literature, face into the void. The notion of "pure" music as a model for the arts, and still refers to something there beyond and outside itself.

Besides, why should "Inapure" art be less elegant, less efficient than the more popular and more commercial? What of the opera? What of the symphony? What of the novel? What of the music? Bresson rejects spectacle, a hybrid by definition. But much, if not all cinema is, precisely, spectacle. It does not mean simply Italian or American epics, the big screen, colourised. While certain films give themselves up to the most obvious and blatant "models", to use Bresson's terminology (cf. apart from Bresson's own pictures, recent examples such as Kevin Brownlow's *Windsnap* or Werner Herzog's *Kaspar Hauser*), this need not be the norm. It is possible to have a bold, but produced undoubted masterpieces from Marcel Pagnol and Sacha Guitry. Bresson's almost complete blindness to the cinema as tradition is unfortunate in one so well versed in literature, painting, music. He remarks of the cinema, "It is not a matter of the immense power of attraction of the new, of the unexpected. From one film to the next, from one subject to the next, with the same unchangeable focus." This is quite true, but it is not the cinema's strength. In trying to secure new focus for certain parts, Wintt concerns me is the implied disregard for the attractive powers of the familiar, of the expected. Directors can play endless variations on famous types and scenes, or they can try to reinforce certain thematic stereotypes, or, on the contrary, to surprise and deceive audience expectation.

"Build" Bresson writes, "your film in white, silenco and stillness. Bresson has chosen to besa his own films on these principles—or on a more complex, more subtle, more human level. He has chosen to do have speech, movement, and sometimes colour. From the endless range of gestures and colours available to the film director, he has decided to use very few, and he has done so brilliantly. My quarrel is not with this, but with the implication that 'New wave' is a *cinématique graphique*—that "who can't see" is less than it is with more." I do not feel that Bresson "could do it with more" (as he Griffith and Ford and Renoir and Rossellini to name a few), and I am, on the whole, grateful that the *cinématographique* does not have a restriction of the general spectrum.

To go back to Bresson's authorities, the reference to Pascal is relevant, not so much because of the supposed communalism of his religious beliefs (Bresson has often been described metaphorically as a "jansenist") as because Pascal is, of course, the author of celebrated meditations on the human condition said to belong to the genre of the maxim. The genre is a trifle old-fashioned, and if Bresson bears a few of its felicities (a banding of striking metaphors, to do not avoid some of its faults), he achieves a rather facile petradoxos ("In this language of images, one must lose the notion of image completely") nor trivialize ("When you do not know what you are doing and what you are doing is beautiful, this is inspiration") too often, like La Rochefoucauld. Marxines, Bresson's *Notes* could be made to stand on their head, and look just as good. Try it without. Something failed, should you change its place, may be successful.

**By Michael Banton**

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**DANIEL J. LEAR :**  
From Samba to Superspode  
The Black Experience in Britain  
Pictures  
301pp, Secker and Warburg, £5.50.

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Addressing a white American audience, James Baldwin once observed, "I am not a nigger, I am a man. And the question is, why do you need a nigger?" This challenge should occur to any reader of Daniel J. Lear's generously illustrated From Samba to Superspode, and it passes a whole set of subsidiary questions.

What seems beyond all reasonable doubt is that, whether we wanted them or not, Hollywood gave us a long series of niggers. Between the 1930s and 1950, the movie blacks were played by "white actors" in blackface—or nat—was an uneasy menace, a dancing machine, a comic stage, a folklift retainer, s cheerful funkney, a talented individual, a personification of the caricatures of the white immigrant and the rural black were also unpleasant, but they were progressively softened as their groups were assimilated. The black person remained outside, displaced, alienated, a little bit different, opposite to those treasured by white American society.

Why was such fare served up to us? The nuthar suggests that It was primarily a response to the box office. Some images were unwelcome. When in 1910 Jack Johnson beat the white heavyweight boxing champion, a federal law was passed to prevent any future sportsman's concernance any film of a prize fight intended for public showing, and the London County Council resolved that "public exhibition . . . of the recent prize fight in the United States . . . to undesirable . . . in places like Memphis, Tennessee, licenses to exhibit were refused." The only outlet for a screen image of the black person was forced to be worse than the reality even on fairly factual matters. For example, an exhibitor in 1917 sold his patrons liked a film but he was uneasy about showing it because it portrayed coloured people as officers in the local militia object to them. Then, after 1946, too industry started to produce films about the least disturbing aspects of racial tension, this was in response to a search for profit in the face of growing competition from television. This involves a representation of reality on a subjective variety headline." More Adult Pix Key to Top Gun."

hicles helped to arrange formal marriages for their slaves because the slaves' social blundering had no reassuring effect, and among the whites of the northern states there was a great demand for books of etiquette as the newcomers were wondrously ignorant of the conventions that governed life in the new generation. Characters who looked more white than black (law extraordinarily silly in the American practice of counting them as light-complexioned blacks) were doubtless accepted as models by many theatre audiences, but how could the black actors have been the new native structure of white America? Who could wish that such questions had been explored when that there had been some comparison with the experience of the North American Indian in motion

Had Professor Leibel been able to obtain the rights to the images of the people who gained a particular hold, like those of Uncle Tom, Topsy, and Black Sam which feature in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the scolding but still popular *Sammy's Gone With The Wind*, there could have been further question: Why did they remain as popular as they did? This question cannot be answered by a study of the films themselves, but only on the basis of the evidence of rudimentary research. Not that, thus

We begin to come close to Baldwin's challenge, for there is a great difference between wanting a nigger and needing one. Whether or not we want a nigger, all the people—and I, for one, am sceptical—it is certain that we are not going to get them in the future. William Styron's book *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, which has been made into a novel about a slave rebellion in 1831, but it had a hostile reception from some black critics, until, so I understand, black activists put paid to plans to produce a film version. The transformation of the novel was transformed since the days of *The Birth of a Nation* and if there were any Santhos left, they will not be allowed on the screen.

The replacement movie which the producers offered during the 1950s—around 1960—was *Huckleberry Finn*. Until he tired of it, this was the

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# TLS Commentary

## The happy squanderer

By John Carey  
Barry Lyndon is one of Thackeray's most dazzling and subtle performances. The story of a low Irish adventurer who bamboozles a rather stupid English countess into marrying him, and then drives her half mad with his cruelty, provided an outlet for a number of his imaginative preoccupations. The fascination and repulsion with which both the Irish and the aristocracy inspired him mingled here with guilt about his own wife's insanity, for which his neglect of her had been partly to blame. At the same time, Barry's service in the Seven Years War and his career as a professional gambler gave Thackeray the opportunity of writing about the contradictions in eighteenth-century culture that always intrigued him: on the one hand the elegance and the glittering salons, and the young bloods sinking their Mecklin ruffles over the green tables or faro; on the other, the armies of degraded nobles mastered round Europe, their heads crowned with flour and candle-grease, slaughtering one another on campaigns which could bring them no conceivable benefit. Barry Lyndon's picture of the eighteenth century is for more compelling than the wretched confessions dispensed in *Henry Esmond* or *The Virginians*, and its account of the intricate treatment of warfare in Scotland. With luck Stanley Kubrick's film will help to direct attention towards the general superiority of Thackeray's early writing when compared with the novel he turned out after *Vanity Fair*. Even if it doesn't, it will still be a testimony of Kubrick's literary discrimination that he should have chosen one of the early pieces to make a film of. Thackeray's horror of vulgarity would probably have prevented him from allowing his work to be adapted for the screen at all. But if he could have seen Kubrick's version, two things about it would have greatly pleased him. The first is its slowness. The camera lingers over summer landscapes and

sumptuous interiors and depraved faces bleached by wax lights, so much that you seem to be watching a series of pointings rather than a film. Thackeray had wanted, more than anything, to be a painter. He turned to writing only as a second best, and was always complaining about how little words could achieve by comparison with brush and palette. This struck him particularly when he visited Ireland. The Irish Sketch Book keeps breaking out into dejected speculations about how Duford or Berkeley or Clonmel would have depicted the scenery: "You can do anything but describe it in words." Kubrick's painterly emphasis is in this respect true to Thackeray's creative impulse. The other thing Thackeray would have liked about the film is the way the fullness of life comes across. The mournful paces of the aristocrats, the pointlessness of human existence. The figures trail around dressed in their wigs and gorgeous costumes, amusing themselves as best they can with gambling and bloodshed. Though Thackeray was in his early thirties when he wrote Barry Lyndon, he had, like Barry, already squandered his way through their hands on in a lifetime, and had again like Barry—endured the loss of his fortune, the collapse of his marriage and the death of a dearly loved child. The cynical Thackeray who was so up to the neck in the life of the aristocracy had already cut his teeth. But if Kubrick's film reflects Thackeray's intention to this degree, it departs from it in other ways, and so wildly as to constitute, in the end, a total misreading of the text. The narrative method of Barry Lyndon is sophisticated. Barry tells his life, depicting events that allegedly took place some thirty or forty years before. His boasts, his hectoring snobbery, and the preposterous self-righteousness with which he recounts his swindles and brutalities, make him a narrator in whom the reader has very little confidence. The film can't be said (any more than, we feel, he can) when, or



Barry's relations in the film with his stepson Lord Bullington are typical. Plagued by Barry, the treacherous Bullington runs away, but later returns and challenges his stepson in a duel. They lose the first shot, and Bullington wins, but is so flustered that he discharges his pistol hurriedly while cowering. As he awaits Barry's shot he suffers with terror, and pukes up spectacularly into the straw that is laid into the ground out of pity for the wretch. Despite this Bullington insists on his right to fire at Barry again, and this time snatches his leg, which has to be torn off. While Barry lies helpless, Bullington hurries to the Lyndons' stately home, shoves Barry's old mum out of doors, and takes possession. This sequence of events is the creation of Kubrick's fancy. In Thackeray there is no duel. Barry, though he malices his stepson as a child, is too cowardly to lay a finger on him when he grows to be a man. Lord Bullington goes off on his return to the Lyndons and thrashes him severely for his behaviour towards Lady Lyndon. The Bullington episode comes in late in the film, so it leaves you thinking of Barry as a golden-hearted, oppressed Irishman—and to find his lumbered with this sentimental cliché would have annoyed Thackeray more than anything.



Charles Clément, a liked and respected figure in the world of Paris belle-lettre in the 1850s, leaving art critic for the Journal des Débats in succession to the formidable Delcroix in 1863. Monographs on artists, usually no more than extended essays, were the order of the day and now that we no longer have a great deal of time to be sold for a return to the simple but demanding form. Clément published studies of Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Poussin, Decamps and Glayre, and they are scrupulously wordy, and tenderly mystic and deeply to the point. In 1862 he turned his attention to Gérault; a monograph and a catalogue raisonné appeared in 1867 and both are surprising on two counts. The first is that, despite the august age of zeal, the work has never been superseded. The second is Clément's curious confession in his introduction, which begins, "C'est en tremblant que j'ai commencé cette étude. Je n'ai jamais été autant effrayé, et je le suis encore." This is an oddly fervid and even neurotic statement from a man whose emotions had previously given evidence of having been put into excellent order and control by the calming influence of Lake Geneva, where he grew up and attended school and university.

## Skin games

"Drawings of People" and "Order and Experience" the two exhibitions at the Serpentine Gallery (until January 16) confront each other. The first consists of life studies bought by Patrick George for the Arts Council. The other is a collection of American minimalist prints. On the one hand, figures pose, sprawl and attract attention. In the other, incidents are pared down to grids, lines, crosses and platemarks. There is very little

## 'What's in a name?'

First published in 1958, Dr Renney's Dictionary of British Surnames rapidly established itself as the standard work on the subject. The Listener described it as "a work of scholarship which should be in all responsible libraries, and will remain a permanent record of research and application." Eric Partridge, in the Daily Telegraph, wrote that "scholars and students will be appressed and instructed, the educated, intelligent general public will be informed and impressed." In this second edition, revised by Professor M. Wilson, over 700 further names have been added, the list of abbreviations has been rewritten in order to bring the bibliography more up to date, and various corrections have been made throughout the book. £13.50.

Routledge & Kegan Paul

Gavin Ewart

# Patterns of alarm

By Anita Brookner



Gérault's "Epsom Derby of 1821"

CHARLES CLÉMENT: Gérault Introduction et supplément par Lorenz Eitner 472pp. Paris: Lécône Lugot. 300 fr.

Charles Clément, a liked and respected figure in the world of Paris belle-lettre in the 1850s, leaving art critic for the Journal des Débats in succession to the formidable Delcroix in 1863. Monographs on artists, usually no more than extended essays, were the order of the day and now that we no longer have a great deal of time to be sold for a return to the simple but demanding form. Clément published studies of Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Poussin, Decamps and Glayre, and they are scrupulously wordy, and tenderly mystic and deeply to the point. In 1862 he turned his attention to Gérault; a monograph and a catalogue raisonné appeared in 1867 and both are surprising on two counts. The first is that, despite the august age of zeal, the work has never been superseded. The second is Clément's curious confession in his introduction, which begins, "C'est en tremblant que j'ai commencé cette étude. Je n'ai jamais été autant effrayé, et je le suis encore." This is an oddly fervid and even neurotic statement from a man whose emotions had previously given evidence of having been put into excellent order and control by the calming influence of Lake Geneva, where he grew up and attended school and university.

only of a classical scholar but of a humanist capable of understanding the mutation of themes, not only of an artist but of a specialist in manic-depressive states. This is not to say that excellent work has not been done on Gérault, although the best is confined to Clément and his present editor Lorenz Eitner, the finest of contemporary Gérault scholars. It is when one tries to match up the facts as recounted with the pictures as painted that one runs into difficulties. This, presumably, was where Clément began to tremble. For throughout the numerous works that Gérault executed in his extremely brief career there runs an intimation of the sickness unto death which cannot be explained away in purely circumstantial terms. The "Wounded Cavalier", who shows no signs of physical damage, sinks quietly in the ground, gazing upward and in vain for a source of light. Carabians, eloquent in their reproachful silence, emerge from black night like three-dimensional versions of Homier's father's ghost. The victims on the "Raft of the Medusa" who were in fact exposed to the full blast of the tropic sun, toll towards salvation and the horizon like survivors of some horrible theatrical mining disaster. The "Epsom Derby of 1821" is run under a sky swollen with thunderclouds. A Montmartre time-kill is shown at nightfall, with a farm cart wedged into an impossibly small doorway. A monster child, Louis Varnat, looms inertly in a menacing lidglo landscape. Into all of these works are built patterns of alarm and despair more informative than the hundreds of sketches of "Raft of the Medusa" three years later he shaved his head completely. Michel mentions his appearance at the opera in 1823, a demented, skeletal figure in immaculate yellow gloves. By the beginning of the following year he was dead.

The integrating force of Gérault's life was a desire to present a great work to the Salon which would then be bought by the state. This impulse sent him to Italy where he suffered from loneliness, boredom and a terrible remorse, but where he nevertheless conceived the theme of the riderless horse race, the great event of the Lent carnival that had excited Goethe thirty years earlier. This was to be a giant canvas, probably influenced by the Elgin marbles of the Parthenon, and the subject of the studio of a sculptor friend, or the problem was too taxing, or the unknown pressures too great and he returned to Paris precipitately with many oil sketches so hastily packed that they were found to be stuck together.

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lived until the 1880s and died a solitary in a small hotel in Bayeux. Of this Clément makes no mention.

The journey to England was undertaken partly for therapeutic reasons and partly for commercial ones. A painter named Bluck put the "Raft of the Medusa" on public exhibition in the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly where it drew great crowds and got a favourable notice in *The Times*. His ambitions thus restored, Clément began to concentrate on new subjects and on making money, chiefly through the medium of lithographs, his best work of this time. He painted and drew cheerful superficial subjects: jockey riding in the park, horse races, soldiers, and, of course, the Dorset. With the complete unawareness of his genius that marks his entire career he set out to learn what he could from painters such as Whistler and Landseer and began to find fault with the French school.

A rather unattractive desire to make a fortune led him to be a mediocre, and on his return to France he began to invest unwisely and to sink money into an enterprise for the manufacture of artificial jewelry, possibly in the sinister little building in the famous "Lime-Cliff".

With the return to France a melancholia took hold of him (he had already tried to kill himself in London). Projects were sketched but abandoned as too demanding; a manuscript of a novel was offered to Delacroix; and the very few pictures he finished exuded sadness in their twilight paint—as if the material were physically difficult to move—and their irrational darkness. Louise Verdet, who was to become his mistress and marry him in 1849, is portrayed as a cynical pudgy child clasping a cat, her knee caught awkwardly in her petticoat. Under a weighty sky her socks curl and fall. Her veiled hair has a grossness that we habitually associate with Courbet rather than with Gérôme. The same distortions of scale and the same comparison with Courbet are brought to mind by the picture called "Le Vendeur" (Lover). Attempts have been made to turn this into one of the last portraits of the insane, but the artist is more probably a dressed-up model and any effect of madness is communicated by the sinister himself. The grotesque block that extinguishes the sister's face like a candle-snuffer. He wears a dark blue coat and a light brown waistcoat, striped a pinker brown with the brush. His glistening white shirt is evidently arranged to expose a mound of dark blushing flesh.

Clément's final chapter is a model of respectful grief. He relies, as he does throughout his book, on the testimonies of friends and contemporaries of the artist. He concludes, that any student of Gérôme must, that the premature death of this man was an irreparable loss for the French school. And yet it is hard to see how Gérôme could have continued had he lived. His projects, his large-scale paintings on the theme of the "Raft of the Medusa", the ending of the Spanish Revolution, his compositionally uninteresting and oddly out of date. They are factual in the manner of Girodet's "Cuir Insurgents" of 1810, and by 1824, the year of Gérôme's death, the inner world, which he had done everything to establish but little to make palatable, was the preferred mode; meditations on death rather than the brute physical facts of disintegration won Delacroix immense and lasting fame in the Salon of that year.

What we have of Gérôme is a strong, so called sentimental, and may prefer not to have any more. What torments us is the obstinate refusal of the five last "mad" portraits to come to light. All we know is that they were created by doctors, one from Britain, and one who practised in Baden Baden. Until this problem is solved, and until Professor Elmer has devoted a study to these paintings as definitive as his work on the "Raft of the Medusa", our knowledge of Gérôme still comes to us from Clément.

This is a very beautiful book. Printed on two shades of heavy paper, ivory for Clément's text, white for the illustrations. The illustrations, it should be said, are as good as the text. It is a healthy sign that some attention is being paid to those nineteenth-century writers who established the discipline and whose insights are so different from our own. Ernest Chesneau and Charles Blanc also deserve our study. On the present showing, however, it will be difficult to improve on Clément.

# To the Editor

## 'Dissent in the USSR'

Sir—Reviewing Distant in the USSR (December 26), Jack Millar claims that my previous reportage on the Soviet Union has offended academic Sovietologists, and that in my contribution to this collection of essays, I regard the Russian protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia as "useless and foolhardy". Both statements are wrong in several ways.

First, I made unmistakably clear that I was not reporting my views about protest, but those of some Muscovites I knew well. To overtly misrepresenting of precisely Mr Millar's kind, I concluded with the list of several reminders about the limits of the Russians' wisdom.

Nothing in the foregoing is intended to suggest that my friends' attitude is either prescient or virtuous. As suggested earlier, Russian intellectuals and "practitioners of the free professions" seem to me as self-centered and biased as those of any Western country. Perhaps they are more so—and more given to cynicism, "left-wing" antagonism towards authority and a my-country-is-always-wrong presumption—than in countries where resentment of this kind is diffused through its free expression. Certainly the dissent, even the moral outlook, of this kind of Russian is affected by the dictatorship's suffocation of cultural and intellectual life. Inwardly enraged by its subjugation, the haute intelligentsia simultaneously pursues its grievance of being misunderstood and mistrusted by the masses. None of this contributes to sound judgment.

Let me, my own opinion did appear, but it is little resemblance to Mr Millar's description of it.

Neither is anything in the foregoing intended to suggest that the Democratic Movement has had no salutary effect on the Muscovites I have in mind. Over the past five or six years they, like most of the Western intelligentsia, have become far more aware of the dictatorship's essential nature. "Suddenly it's become blazingly clear," a young historian told me. "The country is rotten inside and out. Evil and filthy. A medieval prison run by sadists and crooks." For this considerable growth in understanding, the self-censoring protesters who challenged and were struck down surely deserve the greatest credit.

More than this: all my friends and presumably the social stratum they represent, even some of the urban clerks and workers, believe at some deep level that this dis-

senters are right. The great gap now lies between this knowledge and a willingness to act upon it. If I did suggest I consider the protests "useless and foolhardy", some one needs English lessons. The trouble here is not any conflict between me and academic Sovietologists, but simple misrepresentation of my views. Why does this so often happen when the experts discuss Soviet dissent? This was one of the questions my essay asked.

GEORGE FEIFER,  
15 Hyde Park Square, London W2.

## The Burden of Proof

Sir—Margot Heinemann's second letter (December 19) does rather suggest that she and I are used to different scholarly conventions, due to the history (or so I assume), I to the historical. I took for granted that she would be familiar with the whole literature on her much debated subjects, puritanism and capitalism, and believed that her reading of new primary sources or new monographs, which had escaped me, had led her to conclusions which seemed to me disputable. She assumes that I cannot have read her article and believed that her reading of new primary sources or new monographs, which had escaped me, had led her to conclusions which seemed to me disputable.

Department of History, University of Edinburgh, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 5JY.

## F. R. Leavis

Sir—The "Biography" of F. R. Leavis by Ronald Hayman in *The New Review* (vol. 2 no. 19) and Dr Leavis's letter in your issue of December 5, stir up a few memories which, I am sure, will show that it is not "impossible to remain on good terms with the Leavises".

I first met F. R. Leavis in the early 1920s when I was a lecturer and a research student at Gonville and Caius College. I had just finished my licence at the Sorbonne, and had been captivated by the brave new world of Cambridge by Louis Gosselin, who thought I would find there the best milieu and facilities to achieve being a good student of *disgrégation*. So I attended all the lectures I could find on the university lecture-list, dealing with the authors on my syllabus. This led to a luncheon at St John's, in G. G. Coulton's rooms, who was very kind in his oration and slightly eccentric way. I worked up to this luncheon with Jacques Taine to whom my homologue at Trinity, and his associate, the English translation of my Shakespeare, was favourably received in the very last number. Since the days when we walked together on the tow-path (walked, not ran), when he would allow me to say an astonishingly long and rambling sentence, and our meetings have been regretfully so rare, and my correspondence scanty, I do not find I have been estranged from him, nor does he. No book of his that does not show on my shelves has opportunity lost in mentioning his works, commenting on his judgments, advising him as the most stimulating critic of my times, who can talk safely with the great critics of the past, say Dr Johnson, Matthew Arnold, or T. S. Eliot. I do not think he will ever be displaced from the position he has acquired during his fifty years of a successful career for literature—the position of a man who contends that there is no civilization where there is no living literature.

I therefore went to 6 Chester Hall Crescent, a rather nice house, with an orchard at the back, of which I could admire the greenery through the tuscany apple-trees through the study windows. Leavis was at once extremely kind and receptive, and offered to help me not chime in with the Sorbonne's methods. Then we had a pleasant conversation on many subjects in literary interest. I was happily surprised at his knowledge of French literature; we could talk fluently of Flaubert, Proust, Baudelaire, and so on. He even asked me (but that may have been later) to read aloud one of Baudelaire's poems, just to see what the rhythm and the music were like when spoken by a French mouth. He told me of his friendship with André Chevrillon, the academician, who had published enjoyable and still valuable essays on English writers, and

## 'Justice Accused'

Sir—Shirley Robin Letwin complains (December 26) that in my review of *Justice Accused* (December 5) I "advocated a doctrine about the function of judges which, if accepted, would destroy the rule of law". This is the doctrine that judges should ignore what is provided in the constitution and statutes if it offends their personal moral convictions. I am afraid that she missed the point; nothing could be further from what I actually said.

The slovenly cases I discussed were not cases in which judges had to choose between following settled law and substituting their own morality. They were cases in which the constitutional and statutory provisions were clear, but the background, and the legal background, was so ambiguous, that there was no settled law to follow. The decisions were surprising not because the judges refused to bend the law to their own convictions, but because, though the law was clear, they made new law, they made law they themselves thought was immoral.

Mr Letwin says that if the cases really were problematical then there would be nothing puzzling about either outcome. But judges do not decide problematical law by flipping a coin. Legal philosophers have developed theories about how they should decide, and these theories are popular of these theories argues that judges decide in favour of the interpretation of the law that they would, if they were legislators, vote for themselves. The view that judges are puzzled because the judges decided in favour of an interpretation they would vote against, and in my review I explored different explanations of why they did so.

It is unclear how Mrs Letwin believes that problematical cases should be decided. Perhaps she thinks that judges have some way of discovering what abstract or vague constitutional provisions "really" mean without inquiring about the political principles mentioned which she herself subverts the rule of law. I cannot imagine what that judicial technique might be, and no legal philosopher has been able to describe it. Or perhaps she holds the more fashionable view that judges are puzzled because cases judges should exercise a legislative discretion to make new law according to their own ideas of political policy or morality. But since these are problematical cases, and since they are very important, the idea is more damaging to the rule of law than anything I suggested.

I offered a sketch of an idea of how that might be done, and I thought that it might be a useful idea to suggest. I thought that it might be a useful idea to suggest. I thought that it might be a useful idea to suggest. I thought that it might be a useful idea to suggest.

Incidentally, I am told that a serious discussion of Jon Both and his persistence in Mr Letwin's opinion on the article by James Burke, recently published in *America*.

CHRISTOPHER BROWN,  
The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN.

## 'L'Histoire d'Adèle H.'

Sir—The article which I wrote for the TLS (November 21) was not about Adèle Hugo, but was specifically about Truffaut's film, *L'Histoire d'Adèle H.* Since Jeanine Richardson confesses that she has not seen this film, I have no comment to make on her letter, but Shirley Jones, on the other hand, has asked me to answer her questions (Letters, December 26).

I take the point that, on certain occasions, Truffaut has distorted the evidence and that he has therefore, in a number of ways, reduced Adèle Hugo to the level of a purely neurotic and pathetic creature when she could have been presented as a more significant rebel. Nevertheless, I am not sure that the story of Adèle should be seen as an example of how women of a certain social class protested against the prevailing domestic conditions. I prefer to think of Adèle as a daughter who, in exceptional circumstances, has difficulty in determining her relations with her father, and I thought that Truffaut's film directed towards this theme with both directness and subtlety. Victor Hugo has already become the symbol for the attitude of attitude (and

## De Felice and Mussolini

Sir—In his criticism of Renzo De Felice's work on Italian Fascism ("A monument for the Duce" October 31), Denis Mack Smith argues that De Felice presents both a radically distorted picture of the Italian dictator, and fails in recognizing his own bias (the De Felice having argued, in the *Interpretation* and *fascism* with me, that he had thoroughly discredited the "duce"). It is perhaps worth noting that the accusation that De Felice is oversympathetic to his subject has often been made in Italy, generally by those for whom "antifascism" remains an active political slogan, and for whom anything but a strict and objective approach to the subject would be regarded as a dangerous tendency. Since De Felice writes without emotion there is a tendency to conclude that he is really somewhat sympathetic to the Duce. Had I needed to be reminded, Truffaut's film shows several stills of his funeral. As to Adèle Hugo's profile, as seen by the artist, I have no doubt that De Felice has agreed with the evaluations of two writers whose antifascist credentials are beyond question: Gramsci and Gobetti.

Rather than a great, creative politician, Mussolini was one who was intelligent, an able tactician, a man who knew the limits of his own power, and who knew how to use his power. He was a man who knew how to use his power. He was a man who knew how to use his power.

De Felice considers Mussolini to have been a failure as a leader for several reasons: he was unable to organize or execute his plans (producing both a mediocre Fascist ruling class and a constant turnover in personnel), he was contemptuous of people in general and was convinced that he would never under- take anything for a cause and was above all a "jacked-up" man. Above all, he was a failure in the regime. Lacking such a vision and a "final goal", the Fascist regime was inevitably a personal government, and the "good" of only one man identified with the success of the dictator.

These elements of Mussolini's character, according to the Fascist "consensus", extremely deficient for the "duce" could well change course from one moment to the next, thereby jeopardizing the public support which he gained during a period which saw the Concordat, relative peace and quiet, and the growth of Italian prestige on the international scene. As De Felice rightly observes, Mussolini's own deep sense of insecurity—verging on paranoia—compelled him to survey every aspect of Italian life, even when his prestige reached apparently extraordinary heights at the successful conclusion of the Ethiopian invasion. It is symptomatic for De Felice that with the invasion of Ethiopia, the Italian Fascist regime was encouraged to develop a certain vitality (in particular the youth) were now subjected to the demands of "believe, obey, fight".

One may wish to add other things to this indictment, but it is difficult to conclude that De Felice wishes to create a "monument to the Duce". His statement to the *Interpretation* would seem to be entirely reasonable; he said he believed he had "thoroughly criticized" Mussolini and in many areas "destroyed" him. This was not, as Mack Smith seems to believe, the signal for the emergence of a new De Felice, but rather a "bawling" that his friends and critics.

Rather than deliver himself of the standard denunciations of the "duce", De Felice has preferred the more difficult task of demonstrating, in rigorous detail, the errors and evils of the man and his regime. At the same time, he has brought to light the intelligence and cleverness into the open, which angers many of his critics. This attempt at evenhandedness stems in part from a desire to produce a truly encyclopedic work and De Felice's attempt to create the maximum possible documentation into every volume makes them heavy going, and virtually guarantees that they will be read only by specialists. On the other hand, it hardly seems fair to condemn this exemplary scholarly conduct as "an overrid-

ing and almost obsessive preoccupation with documents". Should a historian not have an overriding preoccupation with documentary evidence? It must be recalled that De Felice is in agreement with the act foot in the shroud of Fascist archives in Rome, and much of what he has written was based on documents which no one else had seen.

Hence the use of long citations and appendices, to provide his readers with information which had not been available before. Previous to De Felice's biography (and it is well to keep in mind that he is not writing a history of Fascism, or of Italy during Fascism, but the life of his leader), most work on the subject was based on autobiographies, hearsay and conversation. It is only now that these "nuts" can be checked against the evidence. The picture which De Felice paints of the Duce is one of a cynical cold man who knew the less showed sufficient animal cunning, intelligence, intuition and manipulative skill to endure for twenty years under difficult circumstances. This major political gift was an ability to hold himself under ruthless control, under even the most trying strains, forcing himself to deal with his challenges with the maximum detachment. In this context (and not in that of real political achievement) De Felice's portrait of the Italian War Mussolini's "political masterpiece". He says this because he considers it to have been a major achievement for Mussolini to maintain his calm when the entire house of cards threatened to come down upon his head, and to emerge, unscathed, from the wreckage of the empire, international condemnation and considerable internal strife. Morevoer, for once Mussolini came to believe in the enterprise itself, not only instrumentally, as a function of his personal prestige or . . . of the logic of his vision of international relations and Italian foreign policy, but, more importantly, as something which corresponded to the raison d'être of his historic role. . . [the war]

look on the importance of a mission. . . .

This is not high praise. It is, rather, an attempt to give us a sense of Mussolini's limits, and of his success within those boundaries. On the longer issue of the significance of the Ethiopian War, Mack Smith and De Felice are in agreement. It was the beginning of the end for the "duce". Why, then, does Mack Smith consider De Felice's picture of Mussolini in this period shocking and unconvincing?

I believe that Mack Smith may have misunderstood De Felice on some other points. He seems to think that De Felice wrote that British public opinion was pro-Fascist on the eve of the Ethiopian War. De Felice has in fact written the opposite, and has shown further that Mussolini did not understand the extent to which a democratic government has to respond to public sentiment. He expected other European leaders to have the same contempt for "the masses" that he had, and he based his expectations of British policy on a cynical analysis of their "real interests". De Felice says that Mussolini was probably surprised by the intensity of British antagonism to the Ethiopian campaign, precisely because he did not understand the nature of democratic government.

Mack Smith takes De Felice to task for failing to consider that Grandi may have been ill-informed by his own staff, telling us that he was "certainly both". One would like to see some evidence for this claim, especially since De Felice has been able to go through Grandi's correspondence with Roma daily by his own dispatch by dispatch. Mack Smith's verdict is a patch. Mack Smith's verdict is a patch. Mack Smith's verdict is a patch.

In a similar vein, one of De Felice's presumed self-contradictions turns out to be based on what

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